BRITISH COLUMBIA
The Best Place on Earth

ACHIEVEBC

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2007AE0054-001074
Sept. 20, 2007

Ministry of Advanced Education
Office of the Premier

FUTURE PUBLIC SERVANTS RECEIVE GRADUATE FELLOWSHIPS

VICTORIA – Graduate fellowships have been awarded to 15 top master's and PhD students who will spend up to two years researching key issues affecting the province, and then join the BC Public Service after they earn their degrees, Premier Gordon Campbell announced today.

"Our investment in Pacific Leaders Graduate Student Fellowships will bring a steady flow of talented B.C. academics into the public service in areas where they will be most needed as experienced employees approach retirement," Campbell said. "We will also have access to cutting-edge research these graduate students are conducting, which will give us a sound scientific basis to advance government priorities."

The fellowships are part of the Pacific Leaders program announced by the Premier this spring to give the BC Public Service a competitive edge in recruiting and retaining top employees. This year, graduate students from B.C.'s four research-intensive universities – Simon Fraser University, the University of B.C., the University of Northern B.C. and the University of Victoria – were eligible for the fellowships, worth $20,000 a year. Next year, the program is expected to include all public B.C. universities and university-colleges.

Fellowship winners include specialists in resource and environmental management, gerontology, public health, biology, hydrology, geography, medical anthropology and forestry. Research being funded through the fellowships includes the effect of climate change on B.C.'s Interior forests and mountain communities, genetic changes in salmon exposed to sewage, obesity in baby boomers as they age, the ability of local emergency management organizations to respond to an earthquake, and the effectiveness of new models of land-use planning.

"We're building opportunities for graduate students with these fellowships, as well as our new master's and doctoral-level spaces, internships and scholarships," said Advanced Education Minister Murray Coell. "We're investing in developing researchers who will enhance our post-secondary system's reputation for excellence, and who will produce new knowledge and ideas to strengthen British Columbia for decades to come."

To be eligible for a Pacific Leaders Graduate Student Fellowship, students must have at least an A- average over the past two years of full-time study and show potential to become excellent researchers. They must be enrolled in a program consisting of at least 75 per cent research that will help government address public service or public policy issues in areas where the government is experiencing skill shortages. They must also agree to work for the BC Public Service once they graduate.

-more-

Other components of Pacific Leaders include a program to forgive all B.C. student loans for employees who work in the public service for three years, scholarships of up to $7,500 for employees who are pursuing further education, and up to 60 scholarships each year of $2,500 for children of public service members.

The BC Public Service is the largest employer in the province, with over 30,000 employees in more than 280 B.C. communities. They provide such services as public health, management of the province's natural resources, policing and correction, licensing, transportation infrastructure and vital statistics.

-30-

1 backgrounder(s) attached.

Media contact:

Mike Morton
Press Secretary
Office of the Premier
250 213-8218

Corinna Filion
Communications Manager
Ministry of Advanced Education
250 952-6400
250 812-7977 (cell)

For more information on government services or to subscribe to the Province's news feeds using RSS, visit the Province's website at www.gov.bc.ca.

BRITISH COLUMBIA
The Best Place on Earth

ACHIEVEBC
BRINGING OUT THE BEST

BACKGROUNDER

2007AE0054-001074
Sept. 20, 2007

Ministry of Advanced Education
Office of the Premier

AUGUST 2007 PACIFIC LEADERS GRADUATE STUDENT FELLOWS

1. **Nikki Astofooroff** of Surrey is a master's student in the planning and policy stream of Simon Fraser University's resource and environmental management program, and has previously won two SFU graduate fellowships. For her Pacific Leaders fellowship, Astofooroff will do an in-depth review of the collaborative land-use decision-making process recently concluded in the north and central coast of B.C., known as the Great Bear Rainforest. This agreement increased the allotment of protected areas with the goal of achieving environmental, social and economic sustainability, while improving relationships with First Nations. Astofooroff will use the Great Bear Rainforest process to identify best practices in protected areas planning, and land-use planning more generally. Her research should answer many of the questions being asked internationally about how well collaborative planning works, and how appropriate it is for sustainable land-use planning.

2. **Jessica Brooks** of Galiano Island is working on her PhD in the faculty of forestry at the University of B.C., where she is focusing on policy planning and analysis. She received the Ontario Forestry Association's White Pine Award for contributions to forestry education for her master's thesis in rural planning and development at the University of Guelph, and has won entrance and graduate scholarships at two universities. Her fellowship research will evaluate new resource management models being used in B.C., including co-management, multi-stakeholder bodies, First Nations governance arrangements and community forest agreements. It will result in a proposed model that will be better able to integrate economic, environmental and social values in resource governance.

3. **Linda Cummings** of Burnaby began her master's degree in gerontology at Simon Fraser University earlier this year, comparing the influence of income and education on obesity and physical activity in baby boomers in 1994 vs. 2003. Research has shown the obesity rate for baby boomers has doubled in 15 years, increasing their risk for chronic illnesses and putting pressure on the health-care system. In the past, people from higher socioeconomic groups have been fitter and slimmer than those with less education and lower incomes. However, this appears to be changing. Cummings seeks to understand how lifestyle choices are affected by changes in society over time, which will help government plan and deliver programs to prevent obesity in older British Columbians. Cummings has also been awarded one of SFU's graduate fellowships.

4. **Natasha Damiano Paterson** of Vancouver is beginning her master's studies in medical anthropology in September at UBC. Currently a research assistant at UBC's W. Maurice Young Centre for Applied Ethics, she will look at the communication of breast cancer risk to First Nations women, as well as what factors – such as language, culture and geography – might prevent them from using available genetic testing services. From May 2006 to August 2007, Damiano Paterson was a research assistant at Genome British Columbia focusing on society and ethics, which in part led to her interest in cultural understanding of genetics and genetic testing. She is also interested in the relationship between research and the arts, and aims to create educational materials – in the form of films, video, multimedia or digital media – for wider distribution as part of her master's degree.

5. **Brittany Dixon-Bingham** of North Vancouver has an honours BA in psychology and will begin her master's studies in health sciences and population and public health in September at SFU. Her research will focus on Aboriginal women's use of mental health and drug abuse services. Dixon-Bingham's goal is to identify and understand the barriers Aboriginal women face in receiving health services, and address a gap in current literature on their mental health and addictions. The results of her research are expected to allow existing programs to be improved, and new programs created to improve the health of Aboriginal women and other marginalized people.

6. **Laura Joan Feyrer** of Victoria began her master's program in geography, studying ecological biogeography, at the University of Victoria in September. She is currently manager of UVic's whale research lab field station in Ahousat, Clayoquot Sound, gathering data on habitat use by grey whales. While studying for her B.Sc., Feyrer won awards from the American Cetacean Society, UVic and the Bamfield Marine Science Centre. Results of her research will be used to develop a habitat model with maps that will predict grey whale habitat use and help policy-makers understand factors contributing to coastal health and marine biodiversity. Habitat models based on her work will provide tools that can be used to identify sites for marine protected areas and assess the effects of future coastal development on other marine species.

7. **Leon Gaber** of Victoria began working on his biology master's degree in freshwater ecology in January at UVic. His research, conducted in the Salmon River watershed in south central B.C., is investigating the use of insect nymphs and other freshwater invertebrates to measure the effects of increasing levels of agricultural pollution as human population increases, and more intensive farming methods are used. Gaber is also gauging the effectiveness of buffer zones between farms and streams, as well as the potential for using stable isotopes to pinpoint the sources of water pollution. His research has the potential to give the BC Public Service a tool in protecting the province's drinking water and encouraging environmentally sustainable agriculture practices.

8. **Hardy Griesbauer** of Prince George is in the second year of his master's degree in natural resources and environmental studies with the forestry department of the University of Northern B.C. A registered professional forester with 10 years' consulting experience, Griesbauer is examining the influence of climate change on Douglas fir growth, productivity and survival across the species range in the B.C. Interior. His project analyzes annual growth rings in trees over the past 70 to 90 years, compared with historical weather records. The results will help government assess the potential effects of climate change on B.C.'s forest ecosystems, adjust reforestation plans, identify forests most at risk from climate change, and prioritize future research. Griesbauer received a graduate scholarship from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council to support his research last year.

9. **Stephanie Lepsoe** of Castlegar is working on her master's degree in resource management and environmental studies at UBC, focusing on water demand management and climate change in mountain resort communities. She previously has won a graduate award from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, an entrance scholarship to Carleton University and a two-year United World College scholarship from the B.C. government. Lepsoe will work with two communities in the Columbia River Basin, which supplies half of B.C.'s electricity and is particularly vulnerable to climate change. This is affecting water quantity and quality through reduced snowpacks, earlier spring melts, hotter and longer summers, more frequent spring flooding and greater winter precipitation. Lepsoe's research will determine water conservation strategies and provide the communities with a range of options for a sustainable water use policy.

10. **Andrea Miskelly** of Vancouver is working towards her master's degree in environmental engineering at UBC. She previously received a fellowship from the UBC bridge program under the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research and the Canadian Institutes for Health Research, as well as two awards from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada. Miskelly's research will investigate a major issue facing pulp and paper mills today: why the endocrine systems of fish are disrupted by waste released into the water, even though that waste has already been treated biologically. Miskelly suspects that plant steroids called phytosterols, prevalent in wood, are transformed into animal steroids as microorganisms break down organic waste during biological watewater treatment. Her research into this theory could help shape the future of pulp mill waste water treatment and help eliminate damage to fish near these mills.

11. **Heather Osachoff** of North Vancouver is completing her master's degree in biology at SFU and will continue on to a doctorate studying the effects of sewage on salmon health. Her fellowship covers research using genomics tools to measure genetic changes in chinook salmon exposed to sewage, and focuses specifically on the effects caused by estrogens or estrogen-mimicking compounds. Osachoff, who was born and raised in Salmon Arm, believes by measuring toxicity at the molecular level, early warnings of damage, such as feminization of male fish, can be discovered while there is still time to save fish populations. Her results may help public service ecosystem managers make decisions about levels of sewage treatment required.

12. **Kara Przeczek** of Prince George began her master's work in natural resources and environmental studies at UNBC at the beginning of this year. She has previously received three awards from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and is working towards a career as a hydrologist involved in the wise use, management and protection of B.C.'s water supply. Przeczek's research project aims to improve modelling of snowmelt runoff for more accurate prediction of timing and quantity. She will examine the effect of slope, aspect, elevation and vegetation on radiation and snowmelt. She will also model the effects of climate change on precipitation, snow accumulation, snowmelt runoff and water resources in the Quesnel River Basin.

13. **Chelsea Ricketts** of Kelowna is working on her master's of science in biology at UBC Okanagan, where she also earned her B.Sc. She has previously won three awards from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, as well as one from the B.C. Cancer Foundation. Ricketts will study the effects of molybdenum on rainbow trout, as an increase demand for this heavy metal has sparked renewed interest in exploration and mining, and little information exists on the effects of raised molybdenum levels on any organisms. This research will be of interest to those responsible for managing and monitoring fish stocks in B.C., those who assess drinking water guidelines, and those who assess and monitor the environmental impact of mining.

14. **Mark Seemann** of Victoria is conducting emergency management research as a PhD student in the department of geography at UVic. His research will focus on community resilience to damaging earthquakes. Seeman is an internationally certified emergency manager who worked as an analyst for the B.C. Provincial Emergency Program. He was involved in responding to the World Trade Centre disaster in 2001, the 2003 firestorm in central B.C., and the 2004 avian flu outbreak in Abbotsford.

15. **Marc Steynen** of Prince George has a B.Sc. in natural resources and environmental sciences from UNBC, and is in the second year of his master's program at the same university. He is a registered professional forester who has worked most recently as a municipal arborist, but has over 10 years' experience in the B.C. forest industry. His master's research focuses on how globalization is changing the relationships between wood processing companies and their host communities, which depend on them economically. The goal of his research is to provide policy suggestions that will help the B.C. public service and forest companies create and maintain a competitive, diverse and sustainable forest industry.

-30-

Media contact: Corinna Filion
Communications Manager
Ministry of Advanced Education
250 952-6400
250 812-7977 (cell)

For more information on government services or to subscribe to the Province's news feeds using RSS, visit the Province's website at www.gov.bc.ca.